

The Art Corps Regroups – Chapter Two

by Martin JP Green

Weet Hall is a pleasant district in the west of Cliffeield. Through it runs Weet Hall Rd which, as it forges out beyond the skirts of suburbia, becomes Heatherholme Rd and begins a steady climb up the foothills of the Pennines towards to the villages of the Peak District, Heatherholme, predictably, being the first one along the route. When, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the fashionable district of Beech Hill ran out of space for the city's more prosperous residents, large detached houses were built in Weet Hall in a grid of broad, tree lined streets radiating out from All Saints Church, formerly at the centre of a largely rural parish and, with the influx of wealth and patronage into the neighbourhood, enjoying some architectural enlargement of its own along with the extension of its burial ground into the only piece of former farmland to survive redevelopment. A memorial mason established a business adjacent to the church and above his yard and workshop loomed a large walled garden with a driveway winding through its undulations up to a handsome sandstone house named 'Eccleswood' by its first owners, Mr and Mrs Alexander Gilpin.

The Gilpins had acquired the property following the destruction by fire of the former family home 'Beechwood' in the aforementioned suburb of Beech Hill. The new Gilpin residence had been erected in 1888 on what was once Eccles' Farm – hence the prefix, the suffix a nod to the former residence where Sir James Gilpin had spent the last years of his distinguished public life. Lady Gilpin had been very happy in Beech Hill and it had grieved her to have to move. But her son had been insistent on a 'clean start' for his mother, himself and his new wife, Alice.

Lady Gilpin outlived her husband by fifteen years and was delighted to welcome four children into the world, all girls (she would have been happier with one boy at least, but never mind) while her son progressed from councillor to Lord Mayor and was in office in 1888 when Cliffeield finally had the status of 'city' conferred upon it and earned a visit from the Queen as an added bonus. Alexander had escorted his Sovereign to the Jubilee Gardens, the town hall and finally to the recently opened Gilpin Gallery where she unveiled a portrait of Alexander and Alice's beautiful children painted by Charles Singer. *The Gilpin Sisters* became a favourite in the city's collection and was destined to be loaned to many institutions across the world in the century following its inclusion in the city's art collection.

Business had been good for Alexander Gilpin. The brewery had thrived and he had acquired more breweries in the city and nearby towns as well as many pubs and hotels. He had also, much to his satisfaction, been able to buy out Mulholland's manufacturing business after the son had taken it on when his father became ill. Archie had made an utter hash of running it, having to unload most of the assets including his prized racehorse 'Sundial' which was acquired by the Earl of Altonbury who raced it successfully for five years before putting it out to stud on his estate where it sired several more winners and became something of a local legend.

After his mother died (and by now very comfortably off), Gilpin decided to move the family into the Peak District where he planned to live out the rest of his years as a country

squire; hunting, shooting, fishing and holding balls for his beautiful daughters to parade their charms and attract appropriate spouses from the country set. He acquired Brookbarn Manor a mile from Heatherholme, a rambling hunting lodge sitting in fifty acres of grounds, overlooked by the gritstone crust of Hastilar Edge and sandwiched between woods on one side and steep meadows and rubbly sheep grazing on the other. It would have been a simple matter to let an agent handle the disposal of Eccleswood and it would have made him a tidy sum too (not that he needed the cash). But his wife had had other ideas. Since her youth, Alice Gilpin (nee Norton) had been an enthusiastic watercolourist. With an art gallery at her disposal, albeit one managed by an ambitious young curator in the person of Henry Hanstock and, notionally at least, under the purview of the town council, she could indulge herself up to the hilt in her hobby, even extend her interests into previously unexplored terrain: drawings, old masters, sculpture, prints and engravings.

Within ten years of her marriage Alice Gilpin had become a significant collector and the walls of both Eccleswood and the Gilpin Gallery were the beneficiaries. She had a very good eye and, having assimilated more about contemporary art than most professionals in the field, had hit on the idea of getting Charles Singer to paint the girls: and a marvellous job he had made of it too. Her husband had balked at the price of engaging the foremost portraitist of his time (Sir James had actually commissioned Singer to design the art gallery when he was younger – and cheaper!) but when he saw the result, he had to acknowledge it was money well spent.

Content though she was to exchange suburban life for a rural one, Alice Gilpin still wanted to have a say in the future of her former home. She decided that it would fulfil a cultural purpose, like the gallery in a way, but more ‘back of house’. Resigned to letting his wife have her way on all such matters (on most matters, truth be told), Alexander had asked his solicitor to draw up a deed of trust prior to him gifting Eccleswood to the city. The house would be maintained in a good state of repair by the council and used as a residence, retreat facility, storage or workspace for the arts and crafts community. In exchange, the Gilpin estate would gift Eccleswood to the city of Cliffeield and would retain the right to inspect the property (with reasonable notice) at any time to ensure that the terms of the deed were being adhered to.

The first beneficiary of this endowment was Henry Hanstock who had lived in his rented cottage in Winkley for several years until Archibald Mulholland put his rent up by a half, as he had in desperation with all the dwindling Mulholland tenancies. Appealing to the indulgence of Alexander Gilpin in the face of intractability from Archie Mulholland bore instant fruit for Hanstock. No one had ever been charged with burning down Beechwood but Alex was all but convinced that Archie had been behind it after Violet Elwis had spilt the beans about his fling with Alice Norton. The Mulhollands as a breed were martyrs to jealousy and the gnawing vice had soured most of Henry Mulholland’s career as James Gilpin bested him at every turn; buying a bigger house, getting knighted, becoming Lord Mayor, having an art gallery named after him; all barring dropping dead first. But even this ultimate satisfaction was denied Mulholland since his old rival had passed to the hereafter painlessly thanks to a sudden stroke whereas his own path to the grave, dogged by progressive palsy, was to be long, painful and humiliating. When Alex Gilpin heard that Archie Mulholland had been

bearing hard down on Henry Hanstock there was nothing, he wouldn't be happy to do for the beleaguered curator.

Hanstock was an idealist but also a pragmatist. He could see how many of the pictures stored in the gallery basement might be given a temporary home in one of the many still unoccupied first floor rooms at Eccleswood, making room for the more popular works and new acquisitions down at the Gilpin. After one year in residence Hanstock had fifty framed canvases stacked up at Eccleswood, all purchases made by Sir James and all, in some way or another, antipathic to the keeper of the gallery's taste. As long as *The Death of Nelson* and *The Gilpin Sisters* were somewhere on the walls everyone was happy and none the wiser. Meanwhile Hanstock had more scope to express himself. And all thanks to Eccleswood.

The council experimented with a little public library in the ground floor which, once it built up a substantial collection of books about art, met with Alice Gilpin's approval and operated for many years to the benefit of the local community for much of the next seventy years. Hanstock occupied adjacent rooms; a number of artists hired studio space at very reasonable rates, coming and going as artists do, leaving many works in lieu of rent and giving the place a reputation for louche behaviour which achieved more notoriety when Eustace Quinn moved in with Hanstock in the 1890's.

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One hundred years later, give or take, Eccleswood was still, more than anything else, a picture store. With the accumulation of acquisitions, special commissions, long term loans, the storage capacity of the Gilpin Gallery had long been exhausted and the old 'studio', as it had come to be known, was straining at the seams with its burden of art works. In fact, its complement of art had achieved the dubious distinction of its own classification as the 'Reserve Collection'. Sportsmen who find themselves in 'the reserves' and part time soldiers similarly categorised are allowed outings, get the odd game, exercise or training session. But the collection of pictures stored at Eccleswood almost never got an outing. Ironically, most of them had been procured by Sir James Gilpin during his febrile period of collection in the mid nineteenth century. But by the 1920's this species of art - 'genre' scenes featuring homely narratives; depictions of biblical or mythological events or characters; militaristic works celebrating empire; bucolic landscapes in the late romantic tradition - had fallen dramatically out of fashion. And in his way, Henry Hanstock, with his radical views and eclectic taste, had been partly responsible for this, although the trend extended far wider than Cliffeild. Come the 1930's Victorian art generally had undergone a total reversal in its reputation. Modernism and Post Impressionism saw to that as, to some extent, did the Great War after which the defining values of the preceding century were overturned, the very values embodied in James Gilpin's collection with its glorification of Britishness and sentimentalising of the nation's history and geography.

The worth of the pictures plummeted too. *The Death of Nelson* had set the brewer back £3,000 in 1870. In 1934 a visiting agent from Christie's had valued it at £20, his comment "It'd be cheaper than wallpaper!" pretty much summing up the decline. But the Cliffeild public loved *The Death of Nelson*, reminding them as it did of school gallery visits, of happier times, of belief in national identity, and successive curators had removed it from display at their peril, the usual upshot of departure from the rule being a torrent of

vitriol in the letters page of the *Cliffefield Courier*. Whatever the ‘experts’ said about art, whatever revolutionary waves Modernism and Post Impressionism had made in London, Paris and New York, the Cliffefield public knew what it liked: something they could recognise, connect with, understand, trust and remember.

But the brothers and sisters of *The Death of Nelson*, the many pictures Sir James Gilpin had taken such pride in donating to the town of his birth, made the sad pilgrimage to Eccleswood over the years, never to return to the gallery walls. The public forgot them; the curators all but disowned them; the gallery staff didn’t even know they existed, never having had to hang them on the walls or shunt them around the stores: all but one of the gallery staff, that is. In 1964 Bill Hays and his young wife moved into Eccleswood. Bill had been acquainted with Richard Lichtenstein, the curator of the gallery at the time of his appointment. They were both ex-servicemen and lovers of beer, fine wine and cricket, and Lichtenstein recommended Bill to apply for the job of senior technician at the Gilpin. Recruitment procedures being what they were back then, Hays more or less walked into the job, likewise into the residential quarters on the ground floor of Eccleswood, and by 1994 was celebrating thirty years in the old Gilpin family home.

The deed of trust established by the Gilpins was (more or less) complied with via the establishment in the late sixties of a workshop for picture framing, plinth and crate manufacture; a comparatively clean ‘mount room’ for framing prints and watercolours and a ‘mess room’ serving the needs of the gallery’s technical and transport team, needs including - in order of priority – toilets, heat, tea and ashtrays (the ashtrays being withdrawn amid protests when smoking was finally banned). Apart from Bill, who oversaw operations and lived downstairs with Margery, his wife, Malcolm Burke (technician), Ted Corker and Dennis Brookes (drivers) called Eccleswood ‘home’, for the beginning and end of the working day at least, when they weren’t working down at the gallery or further abroad.

The rest of the top floor and the attic were crammed from floor to ceiling with pictures: huge ones, big ones, medium sized ones, little ones and tiny ones, all grouped according to size with no regard for individual quality, the assumption being that if they were at Eccleswood they had already been consigned to oblivion in their totality. They stood in timber and hardboard racks; a single frame edge presented to the observer creating the impression of a library full of very large, possibly sacred publications with gilded bindings. An outhouse held similarly banished sculptures and adjacent to this stood a lean-to full of empty gilt frames of all sizes, evidence of a reframing experiment in the seventies which had proved easier to start than to finish and created a legacy of stretched canvases in polythene bags in the attic while their frames mouldered in the gloom below. Meanwhile the former library spaces proved a useful space to keep empty crates in and, what with touring exhibitions coming and going year in year out, there were usually plenty of these on the premises.

This was certainly the case Monday morning 10th January 1994 as Bill Hays wandered amid a mini-Manhattan of picture crates; crates stacked and free standing; crates painted white, yellow, blue; metal clad crates, plastic clad crates; tall crates, fat crates, squat crates. The variety was considerable but one factor was consistent: they were all empty but still very heavy. Bill had his foot on a ‘piano bogey’ which would soon need putting to use. A couple

of homemade trolleys manufactured at Eccleswood out of carpet clad plywood with castors clamped on the bottom leaned upright against what was once the library's 'returns' desk.

The twigs of the old cedar tree in the garden brushed against the windows. Soft rain flecked with sleet had started falling on to the lawn and the winter bedding. Bill checked his watch. Ted and Dennis would be in the mess room by now, 'mashing' tea no doubt and 'mithering' about something or other that had pissed them off the previous week or was likely to piss them off in the week to come. Given that it was Monday, he couldn't be sure if Malcolm would be around yet, or even at all, his habitual days off sick almost always book ending the weekend on one side or the other, frequently both: and he needed Malcolm today. Odd numbers were no good for heavy lifting and all the crates had to be down at the Gilpin no later than lunch time. It was time to face 'the lads', both of them in their sixties, both of them worldly wise and world weary.

"What time do you call this, Billy!" Ted challenged as Bill limped into the mess room (he was a slave to gout).

"Old story, in't it?" Dennis chimed in. "Kids what lived nearest school was orlus the last 'uns in!"

Bill sighed. This wasn't going to be easy going.

"I've been in the library."

Ted's eyes narrowed.

"Oh aye?"

Arms were folded. Bill took a deep breath.

"We've got to get all the crates down to the gallery before dinner." (The lads didn't do 'lunch').

Arses shifted on chair cushions. Bill knew what was coming next and it duly came.

"Where's Mal?"

Bill couldn't help glancing at the clock and wincing.

"On his way?"

"Oh aye!"

Minor digression at this point. The Gilpin had two vans, a big one and a little one. It will have been observed how often adjectives denoting size have been put to work so far - 'big, little, huge, tiny' and so on. This is because the dimensions and weight of works of art are critical to the transport operative or technician. Artist, school, provenance, quality, even value: all irrelevant. Fragility? Yes – perhaps: extra care required, possibly more handlers and more packing. But, in the end, it's the size and the weight that count. These determine the type of operation, the number of handlers, the handling equipment (e.g. the aforementioned 'piano bogey', the pallet truck, or the sack barrow) and, ultimately, the type of vehicle. So, to reprise, the Gilpin had two vans, a big one and little one, and both resided at Eccleswood. The little van enjoyed the most outings, performed the routine tasks, was easier to handle and

to park and required no tachograph. The big van (6 tonnes) got fired up when Big Art was on the agenda. The big van usually spelt trouble.

Today both vans would be needed and by eleven o'clock were crammed to the gunwales with empty crates. And there was still another 'big vanful' lined up in the library ready for the next shipment. Bill, Ted and Tony, to use the local argot, 'had a right dab on', (i.e. were sweating excessively) and had strained every joint and sinew in their aging torsos and limbs. They lolled, heaving for breath, on the tail flap of the big van, jacketless, hatless and heedless of the drizzle. And with exquisite timing, this was the moment Malcolm Burke chose to make an appearance. Ted Corker greeted him with characteristic camaraderie.

"Where the fuck have you been?"

Mal was unperturbed.

"Doctor's appointment. I told Bill Friday."

The eyes of the drivers turned accusingly upon their leader. Was this true? Bill writhed in a crisis of self-doubt. He couldn't remember. Perhaps it was. He shrugged apologetically.

"Ah'm goin' up for me dinner!" Dennis announced, disgusted.

"But it's only eleven," Bill pleaded.

"Ah've a stack o' lieu time to take!" Dennis countered, tossing a roll of webbing deep into the metropolis of crates to his rear.

"Me too!" Ted affirmed, the two of them gathering cardigans and trooping off towards the studio door.

"Have I missed owt?" Malcolm enquired with surprising equanimity given the evidence.

Bill looked him over. One almost had to admire Mal. His wife had recently left him; he had no friends; lived in a dilapidated terrace; fell prey to every ailment going; was permanently in debt, overweight, unattractive, unimaginative, humourless, idle: an embodiment of negative qualities. And yet whenever the tide of everyone else's fortunes was on the ebb, he somehow came into his own. Bill, Ted and Dennis had hit rock bottom this morning and Mal had a spring in his step. Oh well, best take advantage of it.

"Hop in the little van Mal. We've some crates to unload down at the gallery."

Mal gave Bill the benefit of a supremely patronising smile. 'Poor old Bill! There he goes again!' it said.

"Can't lift owt, Bill. Got a doctor's note. It's me back."

Bill didn't return the smile, let his head sag, slid off the tail flap of the truck and walked slowly to the little van, turning as he reached it as if struck by an afterthought.

"Oh, and tell Ted and Dennis to get the big van down to the gallery. When they've finished their bloody dinners!"

He clambered on board, started the van and roared off in a hail of gravel. Mal watched him go, bemused.

“Wonder what’s got into ‘im?”

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To the minds of many, the Gilpin Gallery had just enjoyed its finest hour, or rather its finest three months. Visitor figures had gone through the roof; the press and the media had been universally enthusiastic; sales of catalogues, cards, prints, plates, fridge magnets and other essentially useless merchandising had exceeded all expectations. But why? The answer was Art in its most bankable form: Impressionism.

The Colour of Monet had closed the preceding week and a collection of seventy paintings brought together by the Arts Foundation and comprising works by Monet, Manet, Pissarro, Cezanne, Sisley, Renoir, Morisot, Cassatt which had adorned Broadhurst, Brearley and Goodwin since October were now sitting on foam pads at the foot of the gallery walls having been ‘dropped’ by the gallery team. The floor spaces had been divided by tall screens specifically for the exhibition, creating ‘little chapels of pure colour’ as the catalogue had put it, some topped with trellis to create a horticultural ambience, some draped with curtain fabric to suggest a domestic interior, while antique furnishings were dotted around to make the galleries feel like lived-in spaces. It had been a hell of a job putting it all together and now it all needed to be taken to bits again and shipping out.

Julien Watson, the sixth person (all men) to hold the post of Keeper of the Gilpin Gallery since it opened in 1878 stood amid the deconstruction, his young assistant, Candida Knox-Hyams, by his side. He was tall, thin and bespectacled, dressed in a loose hanging linen suit which looked like it could have accommodated half as much of him again. Candida was of average height, similarly slender, dark, dressed in black, attractive without a doubt, but with an aura that crackled like a high voltage electric cable. One didn’t want to risk standing too close.

“It only seems five minutes since we were putting them up,” Julien lamented.

His assistant gave him a consolatory nudge with her hip.

“Never mind. We can have some fun this year, can’t we? We’ve got the Ronnie Reeves show coming up. That should shake things up a bit.”

Julien took a step back from her and reflected on their contrasting views about what might constitute ‘fun’. In her case it involved challenging popular taste, ‘shaking things up’ as she put it, daring even to shock and outrage on occasions with displays of deliberately provocative contemporary art. He was no enemy of contemporary art but, given it was he who invariably had to field the complaints from the public, the challenges from the politicians, the probing interviews from the press, was understandably keener on the guaranteed turnstile stuff, stuff like *The Colour of Monet*.

Meanwhile the gallery’s programme had to be filled and, aside from the work of Scottish sculptor cum woodcarver Ronald Reeves which was due to arrive shortly and fill Broadhurst with timber (he *must* talk to Bill Hays about that!), Julien had earmarked a slot later in the year for controversial French artist Celine Chabrolle. He was acutely conscious

that Candida had made the initial running with this project and had been liaising with the artist, which is why he felt it critical to grab back the initiative before Chabrolle was given carte blanche to be as controversial as she fancied and all the good that the Monet show had done unravelled. But how to handle it?

“Celine Chabrolle arrives this afternoon, n’est ce pas?” he ventured, putting Candida on her guard instantly. Whenever Julien attempted levity it spelt bad news.

“Her train gets in at three. I’m meeting her at the station.”

Julien stroked his incipient goatee (he would decide whether or not to keep it depending on how many white hairs surfaced).

“I’d prefer it if you saw the exhibition off site, Candida. The Arts Foundation will be here round two. I need a safe pair of hands at the tiller.”

“What’s up with *your* hands?”

Fair point, thought Julien. Duplicity was called for.

“I have to go over to the town hall. Budget stuff. I can drop down to the station afterwards. It’ll be good experience for you overseeing the packing of a major show.”

Candida scowled. Meeting Celine Chabrolle, possibly having a couple of glasses of wine with her, that was what she had been planning to get her out of the packing.

“Where are the bloody crates anyway?” she rasped.

Another fair point! With perfect timing Bill Hays emerged from the lift with two picture cases on a pallet truck. Julien experienced a sudden surge of positivity.

“Voila!”

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While she was heartily miffed to be relegated to packing duties, Candida still had one or two wheezes up her sleeve. For a start, she knew what Celine Chabrolle wanted to do while she was in Cliffefield and Julien didn’t. She could have briefed him before he left for the town hall (assuming he was actually going to the town hall, which she strongly doubted) but chose to leave him to his own devices, to ‘play it by ear’ as he liked to say whenever he found himself having to improvise in the absence of any plan which, to be honest, was most of the time. Usually he got away with it, but with Celine Chabrolle playing it by ear could lead anywhere and to just about anything. Conscious of the artist’s idiosyncratic agenda, Candida had evolved her own personal survival plan. As far as she was concerned, Julien could take his chances. Nor had she any intention of spending all afternoon manacled to a clipboard and surrounded by plebs. Mark Wildman, the gallery’s conservator, could look after all that with the help of Bill Hays and head attendant Bert Rowlinson and his team.

Wheeze number two had come shortly after Julien’s departure and was hatched via the arrival of a visitor who had asked for the keeper of the gallery but who had been informed by Dot Hinton, the gallery’s only female attendant, that Julien had gone out but that his assistant was available, if that would do. Apparently, it would do. Candida was duly summoned to the gallery foyer to greet the visitor, a very slight middle-aged woman with

remarkably luxuriant eyebrows, and escorted her up the stairs into her office, leaving the electric screwdrivers buzzing and the trolley wheels trundling behind her in Goodwin, Grayson and Brearley. As her guest arranged herself in an armchair, Candida was drawn to her office window by the growl of an engine and a reversing siren, and witnessed the arrival of a gigantic white articulated truck undertaking the tortuous manoeuvre of backing down the service road to the gallery loading bay. The Arts Foundation had arrived.

The truck was followed down the service road by Ted and Dennis in the gallery's 'big van' (tiny by comparison to the artic) full of empty crates which somehow had to get into the gallery to be reunited with their former contents. How this would be accomplished with twenty-six tonnes of Arts Foundation truck in the way was a formidable conundrum, even to veterans of Ted's and Dennis's standing.

"They'll 'ave to go in t'front," Dennis proposed.

"If you think I'm cartin' all them crates up the gallery steps you're even barmier than you look!" Ted retorted.

After some deliberation, they decided to unload the crates right where they were, half way down the service road, and return to Eccleswood for the balance before anyone had noticed or could raise an objection. It would mean a lot more work for the attendants and Bill would get it in the neck but that, they felt, would level the score for letting Malcolm get away with it earlier on.

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Candida had been right to be sceptical about Julien's intention to visit the town hall - to discuss the budget. It was a useful fiction to trot out now and again (so he thought) because, as soon as funding issues were raised, Candida lost interest. She simply didn't do numbers, any more than Julien did, truth be told, although his job description included responsibility for budgets which he discharged basically by panicking about cash once a month.

But it was good to get off site while all the graft was going on. He couldn't cope with it when people started lifting things, shoving things, measuring things, cutting things, hammering things. It has been a surprise to him how much practical activity of this kind had been necessary in the gallery. He recognised the theatre as an environment governed by such hands-on palaver, in fact had spent some time at Oxford painting sets and marshalling props while going out with a girl from his college who had ambitions for a life on the stage, ambitions which had taken her to the Edinburgh Fringe in the August of his final year, then into the arms of a playwright and out of Julien's forever. He'd gone off the theatre a bit after that. But he had seen art galleries as places of eternal peace, like churches or libraries, in a way. Needless to say, he had never worked in a church or a library either and would have been similarly taken aback by how much physical turmoil could be involved in running such institutions.

Given his town hall chicanery he found himself half an hour early at the station, so picked up a copy of *The Guardian* and treated himself to a large cappuccino in the concourse cafe wondering, as he lifted it to his lips, what a self-respecting Venetian or Neapolitan might have made of such a gargantuan bowlful of foaming milk. He had also purchased a notebook

and a black marker and wrote 'Celine' on one page and 'Chabrolle' on the opposing one, planning to install himself at the foot of the bridge to the London line and hold the notebook open as he had seen couriers do at the airport although, sadly, never featuring his name.

He had the notebook open on the café table, become engrossed in a book review in the arts pages of the paper and missed the arrival time of the 12.55 train from Manchester Airport. From the top of the steps down to the station concourse Celine Chabrolle clocked the rangy bespectacled figure draped over his newspaper, his long legs twined together and her name in large black letters uppermost on the table before him. She thought she was supposed to be meeting a young woman, a very persistent and talkative young woman who spoke dodgy French. Who was this, then? Time for some fun!

She ordered an espresso settled herself at a table next but one to Julien's, got a magazine from her bag and watched him over the top. Eventually, he finished reading the review and, still deep in thought, stared for a while at the wrought ironwork of the concourse roofing until his eyes settled on the station clock, at which point he jumped to his feet, knocked his chair backwards and bolted for the platforms. Delighted at this unscheduled sideshow, Chabrolle took a small camera from her handbag and leaned back in her chair to wait for the next stunt.

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Candida Knox Hyams also had a notebook open before her, one her guest at the gallery had handed over for inspection.

"He kept it up for a couple of years, just after he moved up to Cliffe field and started work at the gallery. It's quite a story, one way or the other."

Candida's guest had introduced herself as Marcia Malkin, not that this meant anything to Candida, nor did it when she revealed that she was the great granddaughter of Victor Hanstock, brother of Henry Hanstock and sat back to gauge the reaction which was somewhat deflating when it eventually arrived.

"Hmm?"

"Henry Hanstock. The first curator of the Gilpin Gallery!"

"Oh!"

It transpired that Henry Hanstock had kept a diary which had, along with his personal collection of pictures, had passed into the hands of his younger brother when the Gilpin's first curator succumbed to the Spanish flu in 1918 a couple of years short of his seventieth birthday. He had left Cliffe field and the gallery long before then and taken up residence with his artist friend, Eustace Quinn, in a little Peak District village where he wrote on a wide variety of cultural themes, composed poetry, made clogs, entertained exotic guests from London and supported the local cricket club for which he had played until his mid-fifties.

"He was quite a character, was Henry," Ms. Malkin informed her host. "And some say he and Quinn were more than just friends - *if* you take my meaning," she added coyly.

"You mean he was a homosexual?" Candida speculated with characteristic candour.

“Er...yes. Well...that is, they both were.”

“Quite.”

Candida was getting bored and studied her watch, noticing which Marcia Malkin decided to go for broke.

“I’m writing a history.”

“Really?”

Yes - of the Gilpin Gallery.”

“Ah.”

“What do you think?”

Candida had just about enough patience left to look like she was giving the question sufficient consideration.

“Well, I can’t stop you!”

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“What do you mean ‘*she’s been*’?”

It was four o’clock. Julien Watson had stalked every platform of Cliffeield Jubilee Station, monogrammed notebook to the fore, attempting to snare the elusive Parisienne, Celine Chabrolle. He had checked if the train had been on time. It had! Damn! But she can’t possibly have slipped past him while he was at the cafe. It was open plan, bang opposite the bridge and it had only been a minute or two past three when he’d come out of his literary reverie. Having scoured the platforms, buffeting irate commuters, overburdened students, airport bound tourists, he had hounded his way through the station bar, the cafes, the newsagents, the waiting rooms, the shops. He had hallooed her name from the bridges until silenced by a transport police officer who gave him a short lecture on harassing women which fortunately deterred him from exploring his final option: the toilets. Maybe she hadn’t come after all, he speculated as he traipsed back up the hill towards Altonbury St. It was the most likely explanation. Artists! Typical!

“How was the town hall?”

Candida addressed this question to her office window to make it absolutely clear that she didn’t believe he’d been in the first place and, even if he had, wasn’t really interested.

“What?”

Excellent! He’d forgotten! She closed in on him like a crack barrister.

“The town hall. Your budget discussion?”

Julien reeled then rallied.

“Oh.....there may be some cuts on the way,” he extemporised. It was a pretty fair bet, even at the best of times. “But Chabrolle, you say she’s *been*?”

Candida smiled archly.

“You just missed her. You might even have crossed paths on the gallery steps.”

Julien sat down hard in an office chair. This wasn’t starting well.

“Did you talk?”

“Of course we did!

“What’s she like? Christ, what does she even look like? Have you a photo or anything?”

She’s a *very* interesting woman,” Candida divulged, declining to elaborate beyond smirking and rolling her eyes. This wasn’t starting at all well! “As for looks, she doesn’t *do* photographs of herself.”

“Pity! What did you talk about?”

She picked up an envelope and studied the stamp with apparent absorption.

“I can’t say.”

“What?”

“Didn’t your mother teach you to say ‘*pardon*’?”

“Candida, I am *not* in the mood!”

She put the envelope down and leaned forward in her chair, placing her elbows on her knees.

“The artist told me not to say *anything* to *anyone* about what we discussed.”

Julien attempted a sceptical chortle which he was ill equipped to deliver given his current state of mind.

“You can tell me, surely!”

“She specifically said I shouldn’t tell you! She was insistent. She says she knows you.”

This was another bolt out of the blue.

“She *knows* me? How, for God’s sake?”

“Don’t ask me. Something else, by the way.”

What now!

“I just met a woman who’s writing a history of the gallery.”

This was more to Julien’s taste, and it was typical of him to be so easily distracted, as Candida knew very well.

“Really? Who is it?”

I can’t remember her name, but she’s related to the first curator....”

“Henry Hanstock,” Julien supplied in case she’d forgotten that too.

Candida wasn’t fond of being bested and pulled a face before moving on.

“Apparently he was, shall we say, ahead of his times sexually.”

Julien nodded in thoughtful accord, as an academic might when presented with a sound scholarly proposition.

“He lived with a man, as I recall.”

Candida couldn’t have him one step ahead of her indefinitely so went for some gratuitous slander.

“Perhaps it goes with the territory. Men running art galleries,” she insinuated with the merest suspicion of a wink. He rose to the bait.

“You’re not suggesting *I’m* gay, are you? Not after – you know – *us*!”

The two of them had ‘enjoyed’ an on/off (currently off) ‘thing’ for a couple of years.

“Doesn’t prove anything. Look at David Bowie.”

“Yes but.....”

Julien’s protestations died away as being compared to David Bowie began to grow on him. He could do worse! Candida cursed herself for choosing poorly. She could have done so much better!

*

Ironically, given his recent town hall alibi, the next day Julien was summoned to a crunch budget meeting at the town hall by his director, Spenser Pitsmoore, who was responsible for museums and the arts in general in Cliffeffield. Perversely, Julien blamed himself for the summons, as if he had brought it upon himself by lying to Candida. It was a judgement on him. Apparently, a decision had been made by the council to invest in developing prestige sports facilities and marketing Cliffeffield as ‘*A City Moving Faster*’. Politics is about choices. The choices of the Labour council were, on the whole, predictable: except when it came to ‘culture’. With a restructure of support services (i.e. cuts) the term ‘culture’ had come to embrace all forms of non-essential activity or, to put it bluntly, non-essential expenditure. Culture encompassed libraries, galleries, museums and theatres but, with the restructure, drew under its wing swimming baths, golf courses, tennis courts, bowling greens, sports fields, boating lakes, woodlands, all of which now queued for funding from the same pot.

Councillor Peter Piper, whose brief was culture, had been to Tokyo on a ‘factfinding mission’ and, to quote his personal assistant, was ‘on one’.

“Cliffeffield needs the best sporting facilities in the UK!” he had declared in the council chamber, and with such conviction that none of the elected members present had the gumption to ask ‘What for?’

And thus, a political choice had been made. The city would pour funds into new athletics stadia, an Olympic class pool, a visionary ‘centre for sport’. The National Lottery

had just got going. They would surely help with the funding! But, either way, the culture pot was going to get clobbered, and that meant problems for the arts. The *Cliffefield Courier* had run an article in which Piper had put his case in his typically plainspoken way.

“What do ordinary folk want? Somewhere to run around and kick a ball or a big empty room painted white?”

Julien had winced on reading the piece because he recognised the reference to a minimalist, highly abstract exhibition the Gilpin had staged the previous year – one of Candida’s pet projects, needless to say. But surely *The Colour of Monet* must have made some sort of positive impression on Piper! But since then Tokyo had obviously dazzled him, driven all else from his mind. Pitsmoore summed it up.

“We’re up shit creek, basically. I’ve got to cut the grants to the theatre, the museum and the philharmonic.”

Julien was hoping he might have had something to say about the gallery and put that to him. Pitsmoore sidestepped as adroitly as any politician might have.

“This new Lottery thingummy. Have you ever had a go?”

“Barry Myers collects a pound off me every week so I assume the answer would be ‘yes’,” Julien reported with a frown. “Apparently, I’ve as much chance of winning as by being hit by an asteroid. That’s assuming Barry puts the cash on in the first place, which I wouldn’t bet on either!”

This level of negativity was not what his boss had been attempting to nurture.

“But the funding. You know, the worthy causes, the heritage stuff, museums and galleries.”

So that’s where this was going!

“Look, Spenser. I thought about a bid for the gallery last year, when the lottery got going. But it’s not for paying the wages, for running the place, just for – I don’t know – tarding the place up. And there are so many strings attached!”

Pitsmoore was not to be deterred.

“Still and all, better than a kick in the teeth!”

Julien ambled back down Altonbury St, dragging his heels a bit and wondering if anyone in his field of vision was as weighed down with worry as he was. Reaching the gallery steps, he paused to read the inscription above the neoclassical portico, something he had done dozens of times since taking the job.

“This Art Gallery, which bears witness to the vision and generosity of its principal benefactor, Sir James Gilpin, stands as a beacon to the men and women of Cliffefield, a beacon of spiritual and cultural enlightenment to be made available to them freely and for all time.”

If someone could give an art gallery to a city, surely Julien could keep one going! And that woman, what was her name? the one writing a history. Maybe it was serendipity. Destiny knocking on the door. He smiled, turned to check the time on the town hall clock as,

unknown to him, Celine Chabrolle took several pictures of him from the doorway of the Earl of Altonbury's Sundial, the pub across the road from the Gilpin.

Entering the foyer, Julien gave attendant Dot Hinton a jolly wave. Why burden the staff with his woes? Unfortunately, the wave was so out of character that it unnerved her, she tripped on a kick rail and almost went headlong. He deftly dodged long serving attendant Gordon Staunton, emerging from Broadhurst and chuntering about something or other, and slipped through the 'staff only' door and up the stairs to his office.

The year lay ahead like open country: Ronald Reeves' sculptures, then perhaps something locally themed and finally an international show. And on that subject, where the hell was Celine Chabrolle?

*

"She was here again."

"You're kidding! Why didn't you say something?"

Candida sighed wearily.

"I never saw her either. Dot told me. She left this."

She handed Julien a plain white envelope addressed to 'M. Watson'. He checked the seal and gave Candida a searching look.

"No, I *did not* open it! As if!"

Her indignation was majestic but fake. Had Julien not returned from the town hall so promptly today she would certainly have steamed it open in the kitchen. He tore at it and, expecting some sort of note of apology or explanation, shook out the contents, stared at them and then at Candida for far too long than was advisable.

"Julien!"

He held up two airline tickets.

"Manchester to Charles de Gaulle. Next week. Hang on, there's a note too. *'Sorry we did not meet. I have to return to Paris. Please meet me after the flight at the Arc de Triomphe where the autobus terminates. Accommodation for two nights will be arranged. CC'*. What do you make of that?"

Candida knew exactly what she made of that.

"You jammy bastard!"

Julien wasn't one hundred per cent sure about all this. He loved Paris, hadn't all that much on what with the big exhibition on its way back to the Arts Foundation, wouldn't have minded a break from the budget blues. But there was something about this that didn't smell right.

"I don't know....." he ventured.

"Are you mad? A couple of nights in Paris free of charge with a hot artist!"

He perked up at this.

"Hot?"

"Julien, she's from Paris. Women who live in Paris are in constant competition with one another. It's the ultimate finishing school."

Julien had a weakness for exotic European women. His estranged wife was Italian, dark eyed and dazzling. He had always said he wasn't good enough for her and, in the end, she had been forced to concede the point and up sticks with the kids.

“I’ll have to clear it with Spenser. Still, it won’t cost us anything so I can’t see him kicking up a fuss.”

Pitsmoore didn’t, and the deal was done.

*

A word or two about Celine Chabrolle. First of all, and most importantly, Candida knew all about her and Julien knew nothing other than that she was a ‘conceptual artist’. This meant she had *ideas* and, from his experience, ideas usually spelt trouble. His instinct had been to head off trouble, in whatever conceptual form it might emerge, hence the blocking visit to the station, a ploy which had backfired. Chabrolle was at large and had been in touch with Candida. This was a risky state of affairs, particularly in the light of Peter Piper’s sidelong swipe in the press at abstract art. But she had gone home again, it seemed. Why though? Had she gone off the idea of a show? There was still a slot in the autumn if she wanted it.

Unlike most artists, Chabrolle had money. She came from a wealthy family and had worked for some years as a journalist and photographer for a fashionable magazine, more for amusement than out of necessity; the parties, the travel, the beautiful men, the beautiful women. But she had tired of it in the end and decided to become an artist, specialising in ‘events’, installations and photography rather than paintings or sculpture. There was no inverted snobbery about this, she could draw and paint all right, but she wanted to explore life and society a bit more directly, using her own life as a medium, her experiences, the people she knew, the people she encountered. Her relaunched career was only just getting underway, but those who watched the contemporary art world closely (and one of these was Candida Knox-Hyams) realised that there was something going on. Chabrolle didn’t mind ruffling feathers, upending conventions and generally shaking things up.

As for the woman, she was, as Candida had correctly diagnosed, ‘hot’: slender, dark, red lipped, ‘gamine’ in that uniquely Parisienne style where the suggestion of boyishness somehow accentuates the femininity. Candida was almost certain Julien would fall for her, knew where it might lead and was quite happy to let this scenario play itself out. Yes, she had wanted to work with Chabrolle, but perhaps letting her loose on Julien would be even more rewarding!

Julien Watson alighted from the airport bus from Charles de Gaulle as the traffic swirled anarchically round the Arc de Triomphe. He took a deep gulp of Paris air and shuddered with pleasure. A crowd of travellers were waiting on the kerb to get the bus back to the airport. Stepping forward from them, an extremely attractive, dark haired young woman held up a card with his name written on it. At last! His heart leapt and strode towards her, introduced himself (in French) and kissed her on both cheeks. This must be her! Celine Chabrolle! She said something in his ear which made them both laugh, took the carrier bag from his left hand while he marshalled his suitcase in the other and they walked together down through the crowds on the Champs Elysees, stopping for a drink at a canopied pavement cafe. She smoked two cigarettes while he talked animatedly, using his hands as much as his voice to express himself and narrowly avoiding one or two near misses with passing waiters laden with drinks. They finished their drinks and took a left turn on the Rue Balzac. He was completely in the hands of his attractive hostess and utterly content about it. A few yards behind them, camera at the ready, the genuine Celine Chabrolle followed.

Another thing about Mlle Chabrolle was that she liked games and had the necessary resources to indulge herself to the full in playing them. Having said that, she would have contended forcibly, if challenged on the subject, that what looked like a game was, in fact, a serious piece of art, or at least a set of orchestrated events leading to a serious work of art.

This particular game had been germinating in her mind since the moment she had seen Julien Watson from the bridge of Cliffe's station. There was something about him that, from her perspective, suggested play; his wandering gaze, his tangled limbs, his sudden unpredictable movements. It was the same attribute his staff would recognise although, to them it generally spelt, not play, but pain. Julien didn't stick to the same rules that everyone else did but, to be fair, wasn't aware of the existence of such rules. He just did what came naturally.

Chabrolle held all the cards in this game, the ace in the pack being the high-class escort she had engaged to impersonate her. It would set her back more than four thousand francs a day but she had banked on it being worth the investment. What the outcome would be, well, "Allons voir!"

None of this was of any remote concern to Julien. He was strolling down the Rue Balzac on a beautiful, crisp January afternoon with a beautiful, chic woman linking arms with him. This was what life should be like all the time! This was what he had been made for! They turned right into the Rue Lord Byron. Most fitting, thought Julien, feeling as Byronic as he had done in a long while.

"You are to stay there," she said, indicating the Hotel Balzac.

"Surely not!" Julien gasped. It looked like a five-star job. What could that be costing?

"Here is the reservation," she said, handing him a photocopy which he cast his eyes over and down towards the bottom line. Fifteen hundred francs a night! Jesus!

"We will have some dinner later, yes?" she ventured with a coy spin on the ball of one foot.

He almost leapt at her.

"Dinner? Absolutely!"

"I will come here at eight."

Julien nodded so hard that the vertebrae in his neck cracked. She left him at the hotel steps, the cloud of smoke from yet another cigarette dissipating in her wake. He reached his room on the third floor in something of a daze, cursing himself for forgetting to tip the porter for carting his bag upstairs but realising he only had five hundred-franc notes in his wallet. He made a mental note to break into one of these that afternoon and drop the lad a few francs next time they bumped into each other.

The suite he had been booked into had a high ceiling with a hand painted ceiling rose wreathed with blossom and encircled with garlands which spiralled out towards the corners and the covings. A slave to his optical faculties, Julien felt himself getting lost in the rococo imagery. But that could wait. The first thing to appraise would be the view from the window.

As Keeper of the Gilpin, Julien was the highest paid among the gallery staff. But he was not royally remunerated, curatorial roles generally regarded by council paymasters as vocational and therefore worthy of underpayment on the grounds that the people who did that sort of work really wanted to and could therefore be exploited. When he booked hotels, he habitually favoured economy over luxury and therefore window views generally took in air conditioning units, piles of empty beer kegs, or more often than not, dustbin compounds.

Not only did the window of his room in the Hotel Balzac have a spacious veranda overlooking the Rue Lord Byron, but the grandiose terraces of Baron Haussmann's great civic plan across the street parted to grant views of the Eiffel Tower, a mile away on the other side of the river. Shaking his head in disbelief, he reflected that, had his wife had thrown open the curtains to such a panorama now and again, she might not have been quite so keen on leaving him. With a sigh, half of regret and half of pleasure, he plucked the complimentary half bottle

of Laurent Perrier champagne from its bijou bucket on the bedside table and toyed with the idea of cracking it open. He checked his watch. It had just gone twelve. What the hell!

As Julien lay on his bed staring up at the painted ceiling and slowly nodding off (he had been up since five that morning and the champagne plus the beer on the Champs Elysees were doing their work) Celine Chabrolle sat in a café opposite the hotel and mused on her next steps. With the escort, the hotel and the flights she was looking at an investment not far short of fifty thousand francs. This demanded a substantial return. She had the makings of a narrative in her Leica camera; an overture, a prologue, but the next act had to be the blockbuster. It was time to ramp up the action. She took a reporter's handbook from her bag, sucked on a biro for a few minutes then started scribbling. Her doppelganger entered the café in a broad brimmed hat and dark glasses. It made her very conspicuous but also essentially anonymous given that there were any number of Audrey Hepburn lookalikes quartering the neighbourhood. Should Julien Watson be watching from his window he wouldn't notice anything out of the ordinary. (In fact, he was by this time fast asleep on his bed.) The two women ordered coffee and started to plot.

*

Julien slept solidly till three, woke with a shout of surprise, rolled off the bed and made for the window to confirm that this was all real. Yes, there was the Eiffel Tower and to the right of it the crown of the Arc de Triomphe. He lifted the champagne from the melted ice in which it reposed, drained the last couple of inches straight from the bottle and smacked his lips. The sense of all rules being off invigorated him. What would he do this afternoon? As it happened, he already had a plan. *The Gilpin Sisters* was on loan to the Petit Palais just off the bottom of the Champs Elysees. The Palais had organised a Charles Singer retrospective on the 150th anniversary of the artist's birth and, given the amount of wall space available at the venue, had padded out the show with a complementary exhibition featuring the Spanish painter, Esteban Ortega, a contemporary of Singer, less well known but enjoying a renaissance of his reputation in critical circles, as so often happens after artists have died in penniless obscurity. Julien had resolved before travelling that he would make up his own mind about Ortega while taking every opportunity to pose front of *The Gilpin Sisters*. It had, after all, been his decision to authorise the loan and he had hoped, vainly as it turned out, for an invitation to the preview. There had been lengthy correspondence between him and the curator responsible for the show, and the Director had been dropped a courtly line for good measure, but it hadn't done any good. Nor was he guaranteed the red carpet this afternoon given that he had omitted to tell anyone he was coming.

Celine Chabrolle lowered her copy of *Le Monde* as Julien deposited his key at reception and swept out of the foyer of the Hotel Balzac. He looked like a man on a mission. This was promising! She followed him out into the January sunshine, donning her own sunglasses and priming the Leica for further action.

Yawning with the after effects of the champagne, Julien mounted the steps of the Petit Palais and entered. Many would have felt cowed by such an imposing interior but not the boss of the Gilpin Gallery. This was his metier, his manor, or so he reasoned to himself as he paused at the door. He approached the reception desk, half expecting to be recognised. The guy on duty looked wearily up at him from his PC screen.

"Bonjour. Vous desirez?"

The visitor was pleased to be addressed in French. It pained him whenever Europeans made their opening gambit in English, feeling that he had failed in his cosmopolitan vocation somehow.

“L'exposition. Charles Singer.”

“Fifty francs please.”

Added to his disappointment at being ‘found out’ was mild annoyance at having to pay. They had *The Gilpin Sisters*, when all was said and done, no loan fee either! But what did this fellow know about that? He looked vainly around for a fellow curatorial face then, with a grunt of resignation, felt in his pocket, pulled out his wallet and produced a five hundred franc note. Seeing it, the steward of admissions and guardian of all delights beyond his desk put a hand to his brow.

“Do you have anything more small?”

“Sorry!” said Julien with minimal sincerity.

“Please to wait.”

He vanished into a back office with a muttered curse while Celine Chabrolle snapped surreptitiously from just inside the foyer. She dodged behind a column as Julien span round to take in the architecture of the Belle Epoque, but she needn't have gone to the trouble since her subject's arc coincided with a young teacher standing behind him at the head of a cohort of restive adolescents. They exchanged embarrassed ‘pardons’ as Julien reflected again on the uniform conformity to standards of the Parisienne female. Candida had been right. Any one of them would have felled an entire bus queue in Cliffesfield just by walking past it. But he was destined to dine that night with artist Celine Chabrolle and she fitted the bill with a bit to spare! He stood graciously aside and the youthful enseignante smiled and shot him a coy side glance as the girls in her party noticed, nudged one another and giggled.

Julien accepted a jumble of notes and coins as change and beamed back, not at all the outcome the donor had hoped for, having formed a distinctly negative opinion of this angular alien with his faintly patronising manner and having been looking forward to stiffing him with a mountain of small change. The visitor had another annoying trait: it was impossible to nail his nationality. He looked French but the accent was all wrong. He could have been German, Greek, maybe even English, although he doubted that.

Once inside the boxed off exhibition spaces, Julien resisted the temptation to join the students and follow his potential new acquaintance all the way round, instead making directly for *The Gilpin Sisters* and posing in front of it as if expecting the press to turn up any minute and interview him. But nobody did, so he wandered round wondering whether he should ask to see the curator responsible for putting it all together. It was Friday though, and she was probably still on an endless Parisian lunch, added to which he didn't fancy another face off at the desk, so peeled off into the Ortega exhibition, critical faculties twitching. Within a few minutes he had struck up an acquaintanceship with a couple from Barcelona up for the weekend who had been keen to see the show. Julien took it upon himself to be guide for the day and was attempting to do so in his halting Spanish.

None of this was any use to Celine Chabrolle, observing from a distance, camera hanging idle from her shoulder. She craved action, incident, conflict. Perhaps it had been a bit wistful to expect any of that in an art gallery but, then again, perhaps something could be made of it. She referred to the notes she had made in the café that morning, adding to them the number of the venue's booking office which she had seen displayed on a poster. There was a public telephone booth in the foyer and she made for it. There she notified staff in the Palais Royal booking office that she had overheard a man at the bar in her hotel talking about the Esteban Ortega exhibition. He sounded, she alleged, like a Basque separatist, and she went on to describe him: thirty something, tall, thin, bespectacled, bookish looking. Yes, his tone of voice suggested someone intent on causing trouble. No, she didn't want to identify herself. She knew what these extremists were like: nasty, vengeful, vindictive.

By chance, the girl who took the call had curatorial aspirations and had been boning up on both Singer and Ortega and had learned how keen General Franco's wife, Maria, had been on the latter artist's work (not that Chabrolle had any clue of this). No one was more loathed by the Basques than Franco, the man who had sanctioned the bombing by the Nazis in 1937 of their ancient capital, Guernica. An attack on a work of art by Ortega, or a bomb detonated in an exhibition of his works, would be powerfully symbolic. She sprang from her desk and ran down the stairs to reception.

Chabrolle took great pleasure in photographing covertly the interview between the girl and the guy on reception: his slow assimilation of the data and then the dawning, first of comprehension, then realisation and conviction; her frantic gesticulation as he indicated the gallery spaces in a hangdog fashion, as if he had failed in his first duty; the classic gallic stand off as both parties refused pointedly to take responsibility for the next step. Jacques Tati couldn't have orchestrated it any better. Compromise came with the man picking up his phone and speaking rapidly while keeping a weather eye out for developments. This done, he scampered into the Singer exhibition, emerging a minute later with the school party and their teacher who was protesting, albeit guardedly. She had been briefed and was alert to danger, the shadow of terrorism having been hanging over Paris for many years. Three youthful, black clad attendants saw to the rest of the visitors while Julien Watson, oblivious to the manoeuvres taking place around him, kept his captive audience pinned down with his 'O' level Spanish. The initiator of the scenario slipped behind a screen, emerging occasionally to click gleefully as it developed.

Across the Avenue Nicholas II and opposite the Petit Palais stands the Grand Palais. Its gargantuan capacity accommodates a police station in the basement. From this basement a corps of armed officers was scattering around the perimeter of the Petit Palais while a detachment bounded up the steps and into the building as the gallery staff stood aside waving them on. As they sprinted into the exhibition spaces Celine Chabrolle emerged from the ladies toilet and wound on the film in her camera in readiness for the grand finale.

Julien Watson had by this time coerced his Catalanian duo into the Singer show and had, inevitably, led them first to consider the qualities of *The Gilpin Sisters* which, he was at pains to point out, would not be on the wall had it not been for his personal blessing. What with the language difference, this was something they failed fully to grasp, assuming first of all that Julien owned the picture himself and had loaned it from his personal collection and, finally, as he became more passionate in his advocacy, that perhaps it had been stolen and that he had come to claim it back. As Julien struggled on in pidgin Spanish, the pair became conscious of four ominous presences looming behind him who bore no resemblance to museum staff. They backed away from Julien, suddenly conscious that this man who had so far been merely mildly dull might actually be a potential source of trouble. Julien, oblivious as ever, assumed they were retiring for a different perspective on the picture and followed them. The police officers advanced and, as they closed in, drew pistols. The woman clasped her husband and wailed. He pushed her behind him and pointed accusingly at Julien, having made some very rapid, adrenaline fuelled mental calculations and come to a conclusion.

"C'est lui!" he cried. "Il va voler le peinture!"

Julien suddenly became aware of something unusual going on.

"What's this about stealing a picture?"

Two officers seized him and forced him to his knees, one of them instructing him in Spanish not to cause any trouble or it would go badly for him. The suspect was more baffled than indignant at this treatment.

“Just a minute. I’m not Spanish, they are!” he yelled, pointing at the couple who had started to edge out of the gallery. The unfortunate duo were immediately collared by two more officers.

“Es verdad? Espanoles?” the multi lingual officer queried.

“Si, pero.....”

That was all the unfortunate Spaniard could get out before he and his wife were dragged out of the Petit Palais as suspected co-conspirators.

“I’m British!” Julien shrilled, figuring that being Spanish was not a particularly good plan at that moment.

“Passeport?”

His eyes lit up and he went for his breast pocket, but that didn’t go down well with his captors and he found his arm up behind his back. Then he remembered.

“Oh hell. It’s at the Hotel.”

He was frogmarched out of the Petit Palais explaining which hotel he was staying at and trying to remember the name of the curator he had been liaising with over the Singer loan.

“It’s Madelaine....Madelaine...something or other.”

As he struggled, he caught the eye of the receptionist he had so successfully alienated.

“Madelaine?” he pleaded, meeting with no more than a censorious frown and a shake of the head. As he stumbled at the head of the steps Celine Chabrolle fired off another few shots. The receptionist grabbed her by the arm.

“Non mademoiselle!”

She convulsed, fearing discovery, but he merely pointed to a sign above his head which announced ‘Pas de Photographie!’

It was an hour before Julien was released from custody and Chabrolle was at the ready as he exited the Prefecture, dusting down his jacket and exchanging some brusque words with an apologetic Commissaire. More film was expended on capturing the interchange.

*

The character of the incumbent Keeper of the Gilpin Gallery was complicated, often contradictory; his staff would attest to that, although they might have used a variety of more colourful epithets to capture its essence. He was intense, scatty, sincere, guarded, ambitious, self-sacrificial, confident, hesitant, generous, self-protective, egocentric, self-effacing, kindly, thoughtless, intensely intellectual, naïve to a fault, profoundly serious, at times exasperatingly silly, avowedly egalitarian, constitutionally elitist, optimistic, panic driven, impetuous, circumspect, introverted, hungry for experience, highly educated, clueless about popular culture: all in all a very mixed bag, and that’s just skimming the surface. But he was, above all, resilient. Most people who had been arrested at gunpoint in a public place and then interrogated for an hour in a police cell and been accused of being a Basque terrorist might have felt somewhat disconcerted by the experience. To be honest, Julien did – for about ten minutes. By the time he was back on the Champs Elysees he had a spring in his step; by the time he was half way up it he was thinking about Celine Chabrolle; by the time he got to Rue Balzac he was whistling *La Vie en Rose* and feeling a bit peckish. Every shift in mood was captured by the authentic Celine Chabrolle: from across the road, from behind, from shop doorways. She darted in nimble vectors as her quarry dawdled or switched tack. She left him at the door to his hotel feeling very pleased with herself. It had been a good afternoon’s work

– infinitely better than she had hoped for. But the evening beckoned, and she had planned that very carefully.

Come eight o'clock, Julien was raring for a fresh experience although, characteristically, was feeling a bit apprehensive about it. Where might it all lead? He hardly dared imagine. As with most men, fantasy marched well ahead of realistic expectations: but on it marched, nevertheless. He fortified himself with a soapy glass of Leffe at the bar as he waited for the person he believed to be Celine Chabrolle to arrive. At eight fifteen the girl he had met that morning at the Place de L'étoile arrived, apologising for her lateness. All but dumbfounded by her appearance which had benefitted from an hour or so in front of the mirror, he laughed off the apologies and suggested a drink. She refused politely, checking her watch.

"So, where to?" he enquired, trying to sound breezy.

"Le Boudoir," she said.

After a quick double take he emitted a dry laugh.

"So soon? But we hardly know each other."

She took her turn at laughter, although in a much more confident register.

"It is a *bistro*. Near to here."

"Ah! Lead on!" he said, somewhat crestfallen.

Le Boudoir was on a street corner and the mandatory round tables and wicker chairs spilling out on to the pavement were occupied by young people talking very loudly, drinking beer and smoking cigarettes. Julien's hostess escorted him inside, was recognised by the waiter and escorted to a table in the corner. She pointedly avoided catching the eye of Celine Chabrolle who was perched on a barstool toying with a cocktail and using a copy of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* to hide her camera behind.

The ambience of the bistro was consistent with its name: subdued lighting, deeply upholstered furniture, big mirrors, a pervasive atmosphere of twilit expectancy. It was tailor made to facilitate seduction and young couples occupied most of the tables, toying with one another's fingers or exploring novel angles to look into one another's eyes.

Inwardly thrilled by his consort's choice of venue, Julien was anxious to make a good impression. This he attempted to achieve by choosing a bottle of expensive Sancerre and asking the waiter to have another at the ready. He ordered foie gras to start and veal as a main while his partner selected a fancy bean salad with halibut to follow. The first bottle of Sancerre was empty in little over half an hour, most of it finding its way into Julien. He had subliminally registered the prices and was far from sure whether his free ride extended to dinner. There certainly wouldn't be much change from five hundred francs. Still, he had a couple of notes of that denomination in his pocket. Wouldn't this be worth it – however it turned out?

Fuelled by wine and nervous exhilaration he dilated on a subject he felt reasonably confident about, namely himself, summarising his education; his career to date; his failed marriage (briefly and partly for tactical purposes); his recent years in Cliffefield; the resounding success of *The Colour of Monet*. He had a go at this in French despite his companion's protestations that it wasn't at all necessary, one of the outcomes of his tortured vocabulary starved efforts being the impression he managed inadvertently to create of Cliffefield as a citadel of steel located somewhere just south of the Arctic with immaculately manicured lawns, encircled by gigantic mountains full of wild animals.

She placed her hand on his and steered the dialogue gently back into English, reciting the script Chabrolle had paid her to learn: the privileged childhood in Geneva; escape to the circus (yes, really!); teenage pregnancy; abortion; move to Paris; scholarship to the Sorbonne; failure to graduate; acceptance into an artists' commune; street art improvisations; co-operative creative projects across France; solo exhibitions in Berlin, Amsterdam, Manchester. And then the move, the 'capitulation' as she described it, to the corporate world with ten successful years of journalism at *La Moda Nuova* before she threw it all in and turned back to art. But the journalistic experience hadn't been wasted. Photography had become her preferred medium and her skills had been honed over the years of capturing images of beautiful people and settings – of which she had in the end become terminally weary.

Julien gazed at this quintessence of beauty without the slightest vestige of weariness while Celine Chabrolle covertly captured his spellbound expression from her barstool with all the skill she had honed over ten years photographing the fashion elite.

With the arrival of the dessert menu and the last of the second bottle of Sancerre, disclosure became more personal. There had been men over the years, but nothing lasting. Her last boyfriend had been insanely jealous and eventually impossible to live with. They had parted acrimoniously and he had stalked her for weeks until she secretly changed address. Since then she had been single, having failed to come across anyone who shared her passion for art. Julien made sympathetic noises, assumed as passionately artistic a profile as he could muster and ordered cognacs. As they arrived a man entered the bistro and stood at the bar.

"Merde!"

"What is it?"

"It is *him*."

"Who?"

"*Him!* The jealous one!"

"Oh!"

"He must not see me!"

"Ah!"

Julien realised something was required of him. He stood and put his hand to his brow.

"Stay there," he said with much more authority than he felt.

The waiter noticed him and, mistaking his apparent indecision, pointed towards the stairs. Julien, happy to cling at any straw, raised his eyebrows.

"Hmmm?"

"Les toilettes – la dessus."

"Non non, merci."

This little sideshow attracted the attention of the supposed jealous ex-boyfriend who looked up, noticing which Julien stepped smartly towards him to block the view. The new arrival took a reflex backwards step but Celine Chabrolle surreptitiously nudged him with her foot. He had his instructions and knew what the next move was. In attempting to step past Julien he was blocked by a matching sidestep. This happened again and the staff started to get a bit edgy. For whatever reason, this looked like it might get nasty.

"Monsieur?" the man said in tones that implied "What's your game, pal!".

Julien racked his brains.

"Avez vous du feu?"

The man patted his jacket pockets and produced a lighter. So far so good. The only problem was, Julien didn't smoke. But he was resourceful and, maintaining his blockade, addressed the bar steward in as natural a way as possible.

"Vous vendez des cigarettes?"

"Non monsieur."

Damn! What next? But the initiative was seized by Chabrolle's stooge who took a step into the body of the room and went back to his script.

"Celine?"

He turned to Julien, as if putting two and two together, and assuming a very convincing expression suggestive of latent violence. Julien backed off and put up his hands, as much as to imply 'I never touched her,' which was true enough but for the want of opportunity.

Meanwhile, 'Celine' leapt from her chair and up the stairs towards the toilets. Her ex would have followed but the waiter, reading the scenario as best he could, gallantly barred his way, much to Julien's relief. The jilted party reluctantly resigned himself to hanging fire and growling a bit in Julien's direction until a back door banged and a female figure raced up the street outside. Evidently there had been a fire escape.

"Celine!" the estranged lover roared with commendable verisimilitude.

He pitched out of the door and on to the street. Julien followed and ran half-heartedly after the couple who were setting an admirable pace, so brisk in fact that he gave it up after a hundred yards or so and stood with his hands on his hips letting the January breeze cool him off. Back at Le Boudoir, the maître d' was asking the pavement drinkers which way the threesome had gone, muttering that it had certainly been the most original ploy he had so far come across to dodge a five-hundred-franc bill. Sliding past him, Celine Chabrolle smirked, another roll of film full of juicy narrative safely secured in her Leica.

Needless to say, the unpaid bill was the last thing on Julien Watson's mind. To his credit, he was mainly worried about what the jealous ex was going to do to the woman he believed to be Celine Chabrolle and whom he had taken quite a liking to. But, naturally enough, he was also anxious about what he might do to Julien Watson if they bumped into one another again. There is nothing quite as effective in colouring your perspective on a locality than the suspicion that a violent nutter might be lurking round the next corner. So, his route back towards the Hotel Balzac was circuitous. He finished the evening in a bar on the Champs Elysees, one with large widows offering extensive views, before feeling safe enough (i.e. drunk enough) to return to the hotel.

Requesting his key at reception, he was taken aback to be informed that it had already been taken. His immediate thought was of Jilted Jacques, but the concentration of alcohol in his system steadied his nerves and he asked who had taken the key. The receptionist seemed surprised at the question and told Julien his wife had arrived an hour ago, around ten o'clock.

"My wife?"

"Oui monsieur. I recognised her. She was with you earlier this evening, yes?"

This time the alcohol worked against him, but eventually he remembered meeting Celine in the bar. This fellow had taken them for a couple. Julien couldn't resist smirking at the thought. And she was in his room now! But was she alone? He tentatively asked if anyone else had been with her when she took the key; a man, dark, about so tall. It seemed not. It finally occurred to Julien that he had inadvertently enjoyed a free dinner and, while determining to visit Le Boudoir again in the morning and settle up, he asked if a bottle of champagne might be sent up to his room.

With his heart pounding, partly from excitement, partly from running up the stairs, he paused before trying the door to his room. What was the worst that could happen? She might be hysterical. She might even be harmed in some way. But he doubted that, as the hotel staff would surely have noticed and said something. She might just want to talk, to be somewhere safe. Oh well, he could be a shoulder to cry on. And then, what was the *best* that could happen? No! He wouldn't let himself consider that. And yet.....

The room was apparently empty when he entered. But he heard movement in the bathroom.

"Hello?"

The bathroom door opened slowly and the woman with whom he had dined earlier (was that really just two hours ago?) emerged tentatively in a white bathrobe. With a cry of relief, she ran at him and buried her face in his shirt. He put his arms tightly round her and kissed her wet head, his own swimming. This was almost too much to take in. But then, when in Paris.....

The champagne arrived. They shared it on the bed, he fully clad with his legs stretched out, she in her bathrobe with her legs curled up under her. Was she wearing anything under that robe? He fought the impulse to stare. Finally relaxing (or at least cleverly pretending to), she related how she had given her pursuer the slip by slipping into the nearby Danish Church.

He caught her hand in a spasm of empathy and, as he started to pull it away again, she took his wrist and guided him under her robe where, with a shudder, he made contact with the warm skin of her torso.

"Well, that answers that question!" he thought as she shuffled up closer to him, kissed his cheek and tugged at his tie.

Despite being a bit out of practice, Julien needed no further prompting and tore off his jacket and shirt.

"Will I regret this?" he thought. It didn't really do to get jiggy with artists you were going to commission. But it wasn't against the rules – not as such.

The trousers came next, always an awkward procedure, always the potential for slapstick comedy. But she tactfully turned away to remove her robe then plucked his glasses off with a gentle laugh and they came together, Julien abandoning himself to pure sensation just as the fire alarm started. He sat up, panting in disbelief.

"What the hell!"

This had been the moment she had been waiting for and the plan clicked into gear.

"Come, we must go outside!"

"What? Now?"

"Yes! It's a fire!"

"It might stop!"

"No. Come."

"I must get dressed."

"No," she insisted. "There is no time."

He should have smelt a rat when she grabbed a holdall as he found himself being pushed him towards the door dressed just in his underpants. They tumbled out of the room and made for the stairs. Waiting on the landing was Celine Chabrolle, an anonymous hotel guest as far as he was concerned, apparently absorbed in her washbag. Julien half stopped as he was impelled towards the stairs. Had he seen that woman somewhere before? But he

dismissed the thought and ploughed on. Chabrolle had slipped off the trench coat she had been wearing on entering the hotel and was now very convincingly attired in a nightdress and slippers. Her camera, stowed in the washbag, was soon back in action as she followed her subjects downstairs to the foyer where the rest of the guests were congregating querulously before pouring out into the street to be accounted for. It had long turned midnight and there were some strong words in many languages being uttered, many of them directed towards the unfortunate manager. A couple of fire engines arrived and the occupants, in full firefighting fig, hit the deck and raced into the hotel shouting loudly, largely for effect. The police were next to turn up and they looked frisky. Apart from a little fracas down at the Petit Palais that morning which had turned out to be nothing, it had been an exceptionally quiet Friday. The chief paced up and down with his hands behind his back as the fire officers quit the building looking sulky. Their senior officer briefed the chief, they nodded, shook hands and the fire team were off again in a dazzle of blue lights

It was the manager's turn to be briefed and he shook his head apologetically as he digested the feedback. He steeled himself to address his semi clad guests as the police chief looked on, arms folded. Someone had broken the glass on one of the call points on the third floor, he informed them.

"That's my floor," thought Julien as his new friend gripped his arm shivering.

If someone would like to own up to having done so by accident, he went on, there would be no further action taken. No one stirred, no one other than Celine Chabrolle who continued, as unobtrusively as possible, to capture the sequence of events on her camera. But after half a minute of very awkward silence a couple stepped forward. The man whispered in the manager's ear and pointed in Julien's direction. Whatever he had said was passed on to the police chief who marshalled two of his henchmen and strode towards the all but naked Keeper of the Gilpin Gallery. As he approached a moment of snap recognition flashed like an electric shock between the protagonists. Julien remembered the couple from the Petit Palais who had been dragged with him to the prefecture and the police chief recognised Julien as the irritating Englishman who had taken up so much of his time unnecessarily that morning. He would not make that mistake again. He could spend the night in a cell someone else could deal with him in the morning. Julien and looking like a pallid Christ by El Greco, was bundled into the back of a van. He gesticulated desperately towards the woman who, only fifteen minutes before, had been warm and naked in his arms.

"Celine, Can you get me my glasses!" he wailed.

He expected some sort of corresponding sense of urgency but she adopted an ironically quizzical expression.

"Celine? Pardon. Je ne comprends pas."

A police officer was standing by and she muttered something to him and came over all vulnerable, in response to which he stepped forward to hasten Julien's transference into custody.

"Celine!" he whimpered as he was dragged all but naked towards the waiting van, his mind in utter turmoil.

She graced him with a sly smile then turned impassively and walked away while the woman he had noticed on the landing stepped into the headlights of the waiting vehicles, raised her camera and took a final photograph. It had been a good day's work for Celine Chabrolle, better than she could have dared to dream.

“You got arrested *twice!*”

Julien Watson was standing at his office window, his back to Candida Knox-Hyams, updating her on his Paris trip while taking in the faded Victorian formality of Altonbury Park. He sighed. However agreeable the park it might have been, it wasn't the Tuileries, nor were the browns and greys of the civic buildings framing it remotely reminiscent of the boulevards of Paris.

“I had a bit of bad luck, one way or another.”

“I'll say! I don't know how you do it, Julien!”

Neither did he. He sat down heavily in his swivel chair and toyed with the pile of mail on his desk.

“I can't see us getting any sort of exhibition out of it either,” he admitted. “I was utterly hoodwinked. I suspect Chabrolle was behind it all.

Candida leaned forwards, hungry for scandal. She had heard of Chabrolle's tactics. Her inhibitions knew no bounds

“Tell me more.”

Julien brushed some imaginary debris from his trousers.

“There was this girl. She said she was Chabrolle.”

He paused for a minute as he reflected on this statement

“Or rather she *implied* she was – or maybe I *assumed* she was. Oh God, I don't know! Either way we sort of got to know each other a bit.”

“Go on!”

While, unlike him, she was fully clued up about the artist's *modus operandi*, she had no more idea than he had about the scale of charade that had taken place in Paris. In fact, she was above all surprised he'd made it back in one piece and apparently unscathed other than in terms of a few reputational lesions. Compared to some of Chabrolle's 'subjects' he'd got off pretty likely, all things considered.

“She mentioned a circus and that rang a bell,” Julien added, steering things away from intimate detail. Candida was mildly interested, having been liaising with some artists from Eastern Europe, some of whom had been involved with a travelling circus.

“What was it called?”

Julien's head dropped as he trawled the sea bed his memory.

“It was an odd name, not mainstream. I'd never heard of it. Circus...no, Circo. Circo Berko, that's it!”

Candida *had* heard of it. It was the same one her artists had been performing in. She smiled cryptically and let it rest. It was good to be one step ahead. He sensed he was missing something but wasn't in the mood for guessing games so resorted to platitudes.

“So, what's been going on while I was away?”

Candida had to laugh.

“You were only away for a day!”

Julien's surprise at this contention led to a moment's thought. It was true, he had flown into Paris Friday morning and was back in Cliffefield on Sunday. Everything had kicked off on Friday and Saturday hadn't amounted to anything by comparison. Chabrolle – the woman he thought was Chabrolle at least - had made no further appearance on the scene and he could only assume she had either been appalled by his arrest or was dodging the former boyfriend;

maybe a bit of both. Either way, he had no contact details for her so dawdled around the hotel foyer all morning then pottered around the smaller city centre art galleries in the afternoon, giving the Petit Palais a wide berth for understandable reasons. The hotel manager had sent a complimentary bottle of champagne to his room in the evening, having received an anonymous phone call from someone claiming to have set off the alarm the previous night and being too frightened to own up. All in all, he couldn't complain. Free flights; two free nights in a five-star hotel; free dinner on Friday evening. Blast! He had meant to pop back to Le Boudoir and pay for that. Le Boudoir! His memory took him back to his hotel room. The feel of the warm flesh under that white bathrobe! So close!

"The woman doing the research popped in." Candida reported, and noting Julien's blank expression, nudged him interrogatively. "The history of the gallery?"

"Oh yes! What was her name again?"

"Marcia Malkin."

"Unusual name! '*I come, grey Malkin*'!"

Candida enjoyed Julien's occasional literary references but was not in the mood for it today.

"She's related to the first keeper, Henry Hanstock."

He was vaguely piqued at being reminded. It smacked of patronage.

"I *do* remember. Any updates?"

"There's an Eccleswood connection, believe it or not. Hanstock lived there with Eustace Quinn, the painter. Have we got any of his pictures?"

Julien descended again into the underworld of his memory but Candida wasn't prepared to wait for him to find his way back up again.

"Never mind! She thinks there might have been something going on with Quinn and Alice Gilpin. There were some ambiguous entries in the diary, Hanstock's diary."

Julien was as keen on gossip as the next man.

"Really? I thought he was.....you know."

"Gay, yes. Hanstock was at least. Maybe Quinn was a bit more AC/DC. Remember Bowie."

Julien shook his head decisively.

"I read an interview with Bowie on the plane. He put on all that bisexual stuff, you know. He was always straight. It was an act."

Candida responded with characteristic vim.

"Must just be *you* then."

That was beneath her, he thought.

"Really Candida!"

She stood up, having had enough of this and more important things to do

"Ronnie Reeves wants you to ring him. He's made a selection of sculptures for collection this week. Does Bill Hays know how huge they are?"

Julien winced.

"I'll give Bill a buzz after I've talked to Ronnie."

"Good luck with that. So, what are we going to do if we can't fill the slot we were saving for Chabrolle?"

He stroked his chin, unwilling but finally resigned to sharing his thoughts.

“There’s always George Vaux.”

“Julien! No!”

George Vaux was a local ‘character’ who epitomised everything Candida loathed in an artist, being plain spoken, rustic in style, lavishly colourful, anti-elitist and, worst of all, *popular*. Julien had been threatening to give him a show for a while, partly to wind Candida up but also partly because he knew the politicians would go for it. Candida had counter threatened that, if Julien ever gave Vaux any wall space at the Gilpin, she would start looking for another job, and she had sufficient self-regard to believe that this constituted a deterrent. (Not everyone at the gallery would have confirmed this conviction.)

She passed Eleanor Burgoyne’s permanently open office door and gave the gallery’s designer a wave. Eleanor was, as ever, seated at her drawing board with a fag on the go and drawling into the phone, but she waved back and mimed quaffing a drink which met with a firm nod from Candida. They would rendezvous after work at the Earl of Altonbury’s Sundial across the road from the gallery.

As Julien had noted, the morning post had been brought up and, apart from letters and flyers, Candida’s comprised a large couriered package. Interesting! She opened it and spread out the contents – enlarged colour photographs – on her desk. As she sifted through them her jaw sagged. Here was Julien sitting in the coffee bar at Cliffeville Jubilee Station; now on the steps of the Gilpin; and here he was at the Place de l’Etoile in a throng of tourists; here in a bar on the Champs Elysees with a very pretty girl; now on the steps of the Petit Palais; now inside. Was that *The Gilpin Sisters*? It was! What’s this? Julien with a couple of strangers looking at pictures and talking; and here they are being arrested! Julien is escorted handcuffed from the Petit Palais. Now he’s in a posh hotel foyer – there’s that pretty girl again! Here she is in a restaurant with Julien pouring wine. Then Julien is squaring up to some bloke who looks very pissed off; and there they both go, running out of the restaurant. Dark now, Julien in a bar on his own; then back in the hotel again, then – good God! – coming out of a room in his underpants with that girl. And now outside surrounded by police and firemen and getting piled into the back of a van. These pictures and many more lay on her desk face up until, with sudden presence of mind, Candida gathered them up again and stuffed them back into the postal packet.

She sat back in her chair and half smirked, half frowned Where the hell was Celine Chabrolle in all these pictures? Hadn’t the whole point of the trip been to meet her? And then the truth dawned. Julien had never seen Chabrolle, had he? She must have taken the lot – and he must have thought the girl he was with was her! Brilliant! *Brilliant!* Should she tell him? Should she hell! Not yet anyway. George Vaux? We’d see about that!

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